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CENTER SCENE

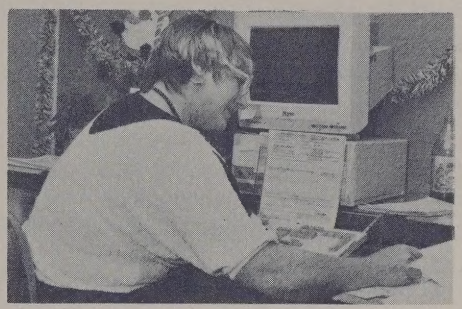
The Bureau of Land Management Service Center Newsletter *January 1991*

FFS UP AND WALKING

If you have walked by the ALMRS Conference Room or tried to reserve it for a meeting sometime during the last 6 months, you probably have asked yourself, "Why does the Division of Finance need it for so long, and what are they doing?"

As most of you know, the Division of Finance implemented a new Departmental standard accounting system called the Federal Financial System (FFS) on October 1, 1990. The planning and preparation for the conversion to the new system was very complex and involved a tremendous amount of effort (and overtime) over the last 2 fiscal years. The first step in the conversion process, which began on October 1, was to close the books for FY 1990. This included making closing entries and final adjustments, cleaning up data in the old accounting system, and producing year-end reports. This first step was finished on October 12, which is the earliest anyone can remember BLM completing a year-end closing.

The next step was to convert all of the financial files on BLM's Honeywell computer to the new system, which is located on the Bureau of Reclamation's IBM computer. Approximately 100,000 financial transactions were converted and only 42 were rejected! This is a tribute to SC, Field Office, and contract personnel who worked so hard to clean up data in the old accounting system prior to conversion. The conversion was concluded on October 19.



Kerrie Garcia, SC-616B, diligently processes documents.

FFS was opened for normal business (finally) on Monday, October 22. At that point, the Payments Section had accumulated a backlog of almost 8,000 unprocessed documents since the end of September. Most of the documents were payments to vendors and other Government agencies, but also included a backlog of over 1,200 travel payments to BLM employees. This backlog peaked at 8,261 documents on October 29, 1990.

The Division of Finance put together a plan to eliminate the backlog by December 14. This plan included, in addition to a lot of overtime, the temporary assignment of staff from several other Divisions at the SC to the Payments Section. The Divisions of Data Management, Engineering Services, Technical Services, and Personnel, as well as the Equal Employment Opportunity Staff graciously volunteered (?) the services of personnel to help enter documents into FFS. The nine volunteers were given a crash course (2 days) in FFS data entry and were housed in the ALMRS Conference Room for approximately 6 weeks. With their help, and a super effort by employees in the Payments Section, the backlog of unprocessed documents was reduced to 2,459 as of December 15, which was only 800 documents over the normal count for that time of year. By the time you read this, the level of unprocessed documents should be about normal.

The Division of Finance can now look back at the last 3 months and smile and feel proud of the successful conversion and effort to bring operations back to a current status. However, it is not something employees in the Division ever want to go through again. Your next question is, "Where are our financial reports and when can we have access to FFS?" Stay tuned, more to come later.

SPEAK OUT

Attention readers! Now is your chance to voice your opinion. We would like to know if you find Center Scene interesting and informative. With your input we can make it more valuable. Please take the time to complete the attached survey and return it to Linda Hill, SC-140, by January 31, 1991. The survey is anonymous — you do not have to sign your name. Thanks for your participation!

PERSONNEL NEWS

New Employees:

Leslie Prosser, Voucher Exam., SC-610
Mark Whitesell, Pos. Class. Spec., SC-630

Separations:

Cathy Davis, Secretary, SC-100
Lee Ford, Clerk-Typist, SC-120
Bill Griffith, Chief, PB & E Staff, SC-130*
Kenneth Andresen, Sci. Sys. Designer, SC-340
Kendra Metcalfe, Comp. Prog. Analyst, SC-342
Eleanor Greer, Secretary, SC-630
Donald Bair, Warehouse Foreman, SC-650*
Bernice Duke, Property Mgmt. Spec., SC-650*
Wally Crisco, Cartographer, SC-671

** Rehired as retired annuitant*

THE PLOT THICKENS

What comes from Norway, takes up almost as much space as two ping-pong tables, and looks like something from the set of the movie "2001: A Space Odyssey?" Ask Will Palmquist, a cartographic technician with SC-671, and you'll learn a great deal about one of the Bureau's more interesting and useful technological wonders.

The device in question is a Kongsberg flatbed plotter, which can automatically plot a map or drawing as large as 6 feet by 10 feet. The Kongsberg can draw using ballpoint, felt tip, or liquid ink pens; scribe using a chisel; or cut a peelcoat surface using a special knife. It can also plot on photographic film by using a "light head" that projects letters, lines, and symbols onto film emulsion.

The Kongsberg, which resides in Building 40 and is one of only two in the Bureau, is used primarily to update the Bureau's 100K series of maps. Running off of digitized data, the machine automatically plots lines and symbols in the proper colors, the large mechanical arm darting and sweeping across the 6-by-10-foot surface in perfect synchronization with computer commands.

As the overseer of this technological marvel, Will Palmquist faces a daily challenge — how to persuade the Kongsberg, which was designed to work with widely available commercial software, to accept Bureau software designs. The task requires patience, enthusiasm, and a tinkerer's frame of mind.

Will, who is a hydrologist and geologist by education, was given just 2 days of hands-*off* on-the-job training prior to being turned loose to fend for himself. Working with cartographer Keith Francis, who was also exposed to the 2-day "training" session, Will pores over the 20-something volumes of user documentation at his disposal as he attempts to marry leading-edge technology with existing Bureau needs and procedures.

Because of the machine's newness and the difficulties posed by the initial portion of the learning curve, the Kongsberg was not heavily utilized at first. However, Will is kept plenty busy with jobs these days.

"I enjoy the challenge of making things work, of having to use my own wits and common sense," notes Will. "The developmental work with new applications is what keeps me interested."

Given the complexity and variety of both the Bureau's needs and the Kongsberg's capabilities, Will should have no trouble keeping interested for many years to come.

THE PUPIL PRIVILEGE

Beth Roetzer & Janine Landberg, co-op students in Tech Transfer

The Cooperative Education Program assists BLM and students alike. The program places students who are working toward a degree in jobs with BLM that are related to their fields of study. This provides the students with on-the-job training and allows BLM to reap the benefits of their ideas and talents.

Co-op students, as they are called, are currently working on several of the staffs at the Service Center. Here are just a few of them:

Beth Roetzer works for the Technology Transfer Staff as a student trainee in illustration. She graduated from the Colorado Institute of Art and is currently seeking a bachelor of fine arts degree from Metropolitan State College. Beth says of the co-op program, "It's an excellent program. I've learned a lot from this experience."

Janine Landberg is also a student trainee in illustration for the Technology Transfer Staff. She helps the staff with their artwork and graphics needs. Janine attended Metropolitan State College. She graduated in December with a degree in applied arts.

MJ Smart works in the soon-to-be "Division of Resource Services." She assists the Division and Branch secretaries in the performance of their duties. MJ has a degree in international relations from the University of Colorado and is currently attending Opportunity School to study business administration.

Kerrie Dennis is an accountant trainee in the Division of Finance. She attends the University of Arkansas in Pine Bluff, and is pursuing a bachelor of science degree in accounting. According to Kerrie, "The co-op program provides an excellent opportunity for college students to gain work experience in their related field of study."

Linda Mozell is a student at Metropolitan State College of Denver. She is working toward a degree in accounting, after deciding to make a career change from electronics and telecommunications. She is presently working in the Division of Finance. Linda says, "The work experience at BLM has given me the opportunity to apply classroom theory in practical hands-on applications. Working in the Division of Finance has given me an opportunity to work with several types of accounting principles and practices. I know this experience will be invaluable to me in the years to come." She adds, "BLM should be commended for their participation in and support of the Cooperative Education Program with the colleges and universities across the country."

Office Security and Personal Safety

A presentation by the Federal Protective Service

January 10, 1991
1 p.m.
Building 50 Conference Rooms

READERSHIP SURVEY

Currently Center Scene comes out once a month. I would like to see it come out:

☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Every 2 Months ☐ Quarterly ☐ Other

The newsletter size is: ☐ Too small ☐ Too large ☐ Just right

I would like to see Center Scene:

☐ Expand to more pages
☐ Remain the same number of pages with an occasional larger issue
☐ Remain the same number of pages

How many stories do you read in each issue of Center Scene?

☐ All ☐ More than half ☐ Less than half ☐ None

Stories are generally: ☐ Too long ☐ Too short ☐ Just right

The newsletter contains:

	Agree	Disagree
Information that is new to me	☐	☐
Information that I have seen elsewhere (all-employee bulletins, other newsletters)	☐	☐
A good balance of new and repetitive information	☐	☐

The tone of stories is: ☐ Too formal ☐ Too informal ☐ Well balanced

The quality of the pictures is:

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

The quantity of pictures in each issue is:

☐ Excellent - there are pictures with every major story
☐ Good - pictures are used with most stories
☐ Fair - use of pictures is adequate for the number of stories
☐ Poor - not enough pictures are used

I keep my current issue of Center Scene for:

☐ A day ☐ A week ☐ A month ☐ A year ☐ Other

Each SC employee should receive a copy of Center Scene each month. I receive my copy:

☐ 75-100% of the time ☐ 25-49% of the time
☐ 50-74% of the time ☐ less than 25% of the time

I like the following attributes of Center Scene:

	Agree	Disagree
Type of paper used	☐	☐
Color of paper used	☐	☐
Color of ink used	☐	☐
Masthead design	☐	☐
Name of newsletter	☐	☐
Size of Type	☐	☐
Variety of Type Sizes	☐	☐

Comments: _____

Rank the following story subjects as (1) very interesting, (2) of some interest, (3) of only slight interest, (4) of no interest:

- ☐ Special events
- ☐ Organization changes
- ☐ Retirements
- ☐ Awards
- ☐ Manager profiles
- ☐ Social activities
- ☐ SC programs/functions/staffs
- ☐ Automation topics
- ☐ People stories - work related
- ☐ People stories - outside activities
- ☐ New employees
- ☐ BLM/SC policies and practices
- ☐ Job-related information
- ☐ Promotions
- ☐ Personal news (births, deaths, etc.)
- ☐ EEO events

I like stories that:

- ☐ give complete explanations of a story's topic
- ☐ give enough explanation for a person who is partially familiar with a story's topic
- ☐ give no explanation - only briefly discuss a topic

Rate Center Scene on each of the following attributes:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Writing style	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ease of reading	☐	☐	☐	☐
Appearance	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall opinion of Center Scene	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments: _____

I have some story ideas for Center Scene	☐ Yes	☐ No
I would like to write stories for Center Scene	☐ Yes	☐ No
I would like to participate in future Center Scene planning sessions	☐ Yes	☐ No

If you answered yes to any of the above three questions, please contact to Linda Hill, SC-140, 236-4238.